

## HOW DO I FIND OUT IF I QUALIFY?

Fill out a Sewer Lateral Repair application form, available at the Ballwin Government Center.

Submit the application along with documentation of the problem, proving that there is a structural problem with sewer lateral that can not be permanently corrected by cabling or that back ups will likely continue to occur. If the lateral can not be opened with cabling, paid invoices from the cabling contractors indicating the problem encountered should be submitted with the application.

Applications will be reviewed and the applicant will be informed of approval or disapproval of the application.

**Applications received that show roots or other minor defects must be accompanied by documentation of a history of having to clear blockage at a frequency greater than once annually. Root removal at a rate of once per year or less is considered normal maintenance and not a basis for funding under this program.**

If the application is approved, the homeowner can call one of the approved program contractors to get the repair work scheduled.

The contractor, homeowner and the City will sign a contract and the contractor will obtain a plumbing permit before any work can begin.

No bids are necessary since all the contractors have agreed to make the repairs based on a set of unit prices for the work.

When the repair work is completed, it will be inspected by the City and measured to determine the cost of the repair.



## DEPARTMENT OF CODE ENFORCEMENT

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## SEWER LATERAL REPAIR PROGRAM

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FOR INFORMATION  
CALL  
636-227-2129

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## WHAT IS A SEWER LATERAL?

A sewer lateral is the pipe that carries the sewage from the house to the sewer main, which is owned and maintained by MSD. It starts at the outside wall of your house and continues to the sewer main.

## WHY DOES A SEWER LATERAL NEED TO BE REPAIRED?

Many of the houses in Ballwin were built before the building codes changed and it became common practice to use PVC plastic pipe. Before PVC sewer laterals, clay pipe with bell and spigot joints were used. Many problems can occur with this type of lateral:

The clay pipes could be easily cracked or damaged when they are installed, leading to an eventual failure at the damaged area. If joints are not properly connected, they can become loose, leading to separation and infiltration from the surrounding soil.

Another common problem that occurs is invasion of the pipe by tree roots. The roots can further separate the pipes and eventually the pipes get so packed that cabling is no longer effective.

The connection of the clay lateral to the house sewer, which was for many years cast iron pipe, can also be a problem area. Because of the dissimilar materials, this joint is made by using a rubber fitting and if any shifting occurs, the joint can be compromised. Sewer laterals can settle over a period of years, leaving what is commonly called a belly in the lateral. Because laterals depend on gravity to flow properly, a belly will eventually inhibit flow and cause recurring backups. Finally, on occasion, even plastic pipes can fail if improperly installed or as a result of shifting ground.

## WHAT ARE THE INDICATIONS OF A DAMAGED SEWER LATERAL?

The most likely indication of a damaged or failing lateral is a backup in your house, which usually occurs in the basement. At first it may only occur when you are running a lot of water, like when you are using an automatic clothes washer, but as it gets worse, even taking a shower or flushing a toilet will cause a backup.

**Sewer leaks** are another problem with sewer laterals but this problem most likely will not show up as a backup. With a sewer leak, the problem is untreated sewage leaking out into the environment through a yard or into an adjacent street, storm sewer or creek. The indications can be a bad odor, presence of black or gray colored water and in some instances undermining of yards, sidewalks or street slabs.



## SEWER LATERAL REPAIR PROGRAM

In April of 1999, Ballwin voters approved the establishment of a \$28.00 annual fee to be collected with the Real Estate property tax. The fees collected are deposited into a sewer lateral repair program fund, designated only for the repair of sewer laterals. In the first few years of the program, we have repaired an average of 100 sewer laterals each year before the money in the fund is exhausted.

**The large number of applications and the demand for sewer lateral repairs has exceeded funding during the first 3 years of the program. As a result, the Board of Aldermen has instituted a cap of \$3000 per job in order to be able to do more repairs each year. In addition, when funds are depleted for the current year, applicants will be put on the waiting list for the following year.**

## PAYMENT OR REIMBURSEMENT

If money is available from the program fund and the repair does not exceed the \$3000 cap, the contractor will bill the City directly for the repair. If the repair exceeds \$3000, the contractor will bill the homeowner for the excess over \$3000.

If program funds have been exhausted for the year, the homeowner must pay the contractor directly for the repair and homeowner will be reimbursed up to \$3000 when funds become available. When you make an application for a sewer lateral repair you will be informed as to the availability of funds.

### **Payments cover:**

- Excavation and repair of the failed section of sewer lateral.
- Backfill and restoration of the backfill consisting of grading into a mound to allow for settlement and seeding and straw.
- Removal and hauling away construction and pavement materials that were removed to make way for the repair.
- Patching of private driveways, sidewalks, public sidewalks, curbs and street pavement.

### **Excluded from payment under the program:**

- The cost of cabling to clear a blockage or to document a sewer lateral failure.
- The cost of having a video done of the sewer lateral in order to document a sewer lateral problem.
- The cost of removal, replacement or loss of trees or shrubs.
- Any future settlement of the back filled sewer lateral trench.
- The cost to repair any damage to or restoration of adjoining private property or utilities as a result of any sewer lateral repair work. This type of potential damage should be discussed between the contractor and the owner prior to the start of any sewer lateral repair work so that the owner will have a clear understanding of what to expect.